Play in the dirt

BLACK POTTERY

Written By
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Acknowledgement

This is an acknowledgement towards all the craftsmen and workers involved in the initial development of the craft.
I would like to show my deep gravitation towards Ram Jatan Prajapati who still continues to practice the craft
I would also like to thank our mentor for the project, Mr Vikas Chhugani who gave us the opportunity to conduct in-depth research over the craft.

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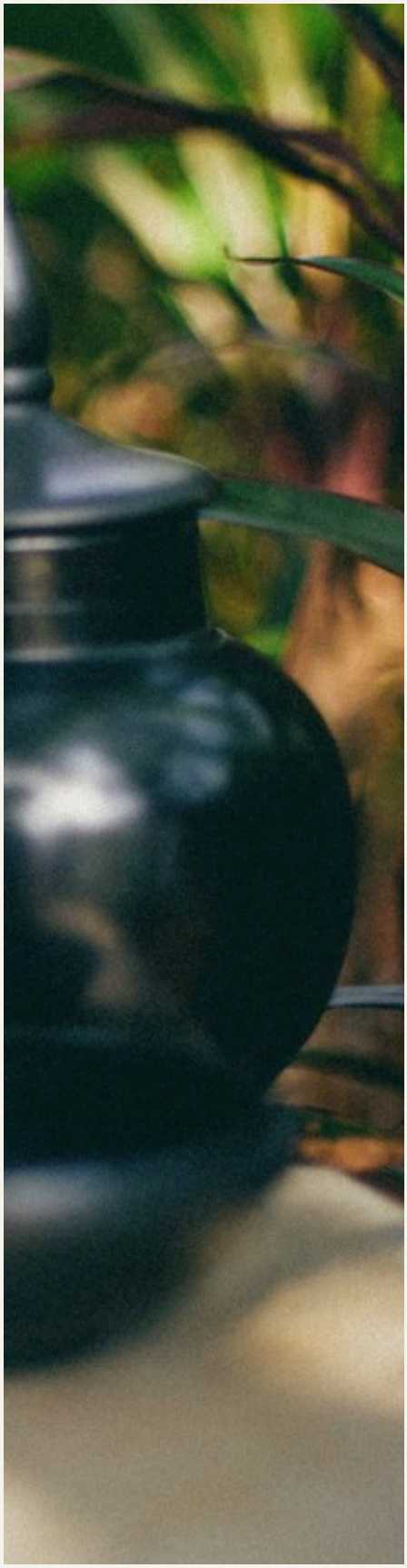
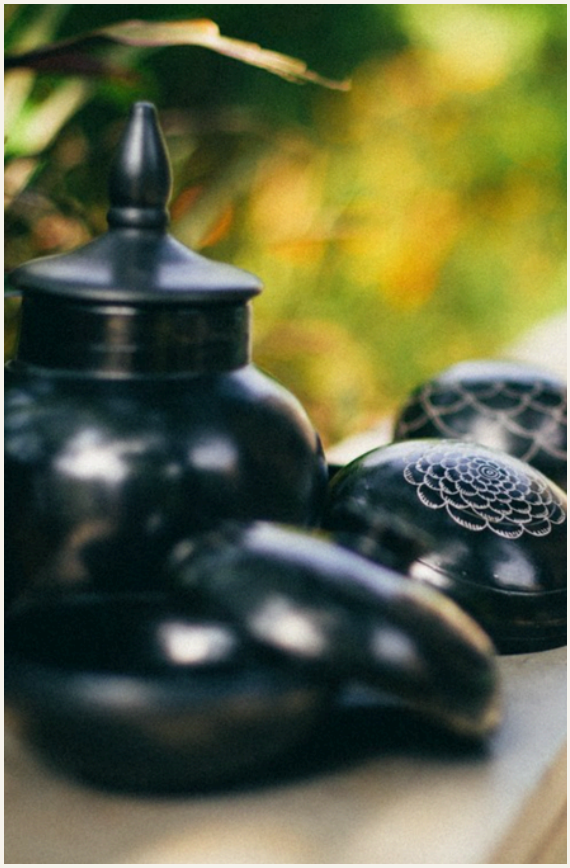


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Craft cluster is a project in which students conduct thorough research over a craft. The purpose is to promote the art which will help it gain more recognition. Students can adopt a novel approach by trying to create something unique and adding their own twist to it. This helps bring light to the dying craft. It's important for the student to be fully committed to the process of how the craft is created and interpret it in their own way. The project helps students know more about the Indian culture and heritage .

"WHEN PEOPLE NEGOTIATE MY ART SAYING IT'S ONLY MADE OF MUD, I WANT TO REMIND THEM THAT THEY ARE ALSO MADE OF THE SAME MUD."



SECONDARY RESEARCH

In Azamgarh, the eastern-most district of Uttar Pradesh lies Nizamabad, famed for its lustrous black pottery. In recognition of its cultural and historical significance, it was granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in December 2015, which serves to protect and promote the craft by conferring exclusive naming rights to the geographic region of its origin.

The pottery is crafted using locally sourced, fine-textured clay that is molded into various shapes and fired in kilns. Decorative grooves featuring floral and geometric patterns are etched into the pottery using sharp twig A diverse range of household and decorative items are crafted by skilled artisans, including vases, plates, pots, lamps, tea-pots, bowls, vessels, incense stick holders, and statues of Hindu religious figures.

ROLE OF WOMEN

Pottery is a kind of profession where often the whole family of the potter is involved, especially the women. In the case of Nizamabad's black pottery too, women play a crucial role, from making intricate motifs on the pots to preparing and applying slip to individual pieces.

INTACH's documentary film, The Black Pottery of Nizamabad, has won "Director Special Award" at the Heritage film festival-2015. The film documents the craft of Nizamabad's black pottery, its process and creativity. INTACH's design intervention has led to the development of black clay tiles which can be used as accent pieces or on the entire wall.

Potters dig the clay from local ponds during the summer season. But with the increase in population and in the name of development many ponds are converted into residential properties. There is no action from the Govt. till now to ensure a stable clay supply for the artisans. Potters are relying on the Govt. to provide a solution for this challenge while dealing with other hurdles related to outdated technology, pricing, and logistics to reach potential customers.

HISTORY

The origin of this craft can be traced back to the Kutch region of Gujarat state, but during the Mughal rule of Aurangzeb, some potters from the region migrated to Nizamabad and brought their skills with them. The artisans in Nizamabad have added their own unique touch to the craft by incorporating silver patterns inspired by Bidriware of Hyderabad, which uses silver wires to decorate pots. Powdered mix of lead, mercury and zinc in equal proportion is filled into the carved design a technique which was introduced from Gujarat during the Mughal rule of Aurangzeb.Today, around 200 families are involved in the craft in Nizamabad, and while the majority of their works are exported, their living conditions remain dismal. Historians have taken note of the black clay pottery due to its resemblance to the Northern Black Polished Ware pottery of the urban Iron Age culture of the Indian Subcontinent, making it an important part of the region's cultural heritage.

RAW MATERIALS

"Meeti" is a main component for the pottery. It is collected from the surrounding and mixed with water to make clay

Sharp twigs are used to make floral and geometric motifs over the pot

Clay wares are washed with powdered vegetable matter and are rubbed with mustard oil. This provides the shine.

Zinc and mercury powder are used to fill the grooves of the pot

Just like they say that the love of a mother flows into her food, the earth of Nizamabad pours its love into its pots. The fine texture and high mica content of the soil of Nizamabad make it the perfect choice for pottery. The soil is the reason why these pots attain the desirable texture and flawless quality that they are known to possess.

FROM EARTH TO ART

During the early months of April-May, potters make sure to initiate the process of extracting clay from their local ponds, they follow that up by immediately storing it in their houses for long periods. Eventually, the stored clay is mixed with water and once the clay thickens, it is thoroughly kneaded by machines. Traditional the clay was kneaded manually, wherein the potter would stamp over the methi and water until it becomes smooth clay.

This is done to free the clay of any impending lumps which may cause obstacles in the long run. Soon after this, the potters bring the clay out to the potter's wheel and begin their magic. Even though the pots are made, the process of pottery is far from over. Next, the potters leave their pots out in the scorching sun to let them dry out and retain moisture. The drying process lasts for at least 4 days After drying sufficiently, the potter's wheel is pulled back out to scrape off any uneven or unwanted layer. Following this comes the part of applying color to the otherwise dull pots.

Now as we approach the end of pottery making, women use fine needles to cautiously engrave delicate designs and patterns on the pots. They make use of brilliant craftsmanship practiced for many years to achieve this level of precision.The pottery's color is primarily due to the purposefully created oxygen-free conditions of the kiln. The presence of oxygen will turn the clay red; therefore, the potters ensure that the kilns are air-tight in order to achieve the desired results. The grooves on clay wares are then filled with silvery powder of Zinc and Mercury, washed with water and polished again

The pots are left out in the sun after applying a coat of mixed water and clay to them. This stage finally terminates after applying mustard to the pots to make them appear shinier. This shine changes the look of the pot.

DESIGNER'S VIEW

"Terracotta by Sachii" is a designed and curated collection of contemporary lifestyle products in traditional terracotta crafts from heritage pottery clusters of India.

The Brand was born in September 2020, with a vision to bring indigenous pottery crafts into the mainstream and help customers live healthy, sustainable and environment friendly lives by going back to the roots through natural and earthy terracotta ware, while also sustaining the artisans into these age-old crafts and helping preserve an integral part of India's cultural heritage.

Each state or region of Bharat has its own unique styles of indigenous clay craft or pottery which has been handed down since generations, but slowly loosing out to industrial products.

TERRACOTTA BY SACHII

Sachii Tripathii, a Ceramics & Glass Design Post Graduate from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. Deeply passionate about terracotta crafts and holding an experience of 15 years in the sector, along with 9+ years of experience in the e-commerce industry,

“FOR THE ARTISAN, CRAFT IS AN END IN ITSELF.

FOR YOU, THE ARTIST, CRAFT IS THE VEHICLE FOR EXPRESSING YOUR VISION.”

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Interior tender project

MR RAM JATAN PRAJAPATI

How did you get into the business?

My grandfather used to perform this craft, he taught my father and my father passed down the knowledge to me. I was involved in the craft at a very young age

How many people are involved in making of one pot

Atleast 6 people are involved include children who help in the formation of clay

Since how many years have you been practising this craft?

Ram Jatan Ji has been practising this craft since 1994

How much time does it take to make one pot?

The pots are made in batches, so approximately 15 to 20 pots are ready in 7 to 8 days time

Is this you only source of income?

Yes, we make living only out of this craft, there is no side income for us.

How many families are still performing this craft?

Initially there were 200 families performing this craft, However now 40 to 50% of the families have shifted to making karva chauth matkas. Our family is not making the karva chauth matkas

What is the price range for your pots?

A 7 inch pot without any carvings will sell at Rs 100 to 150, however the one with carvings sell for Rs 300. The mercury powder is very expensive which causes the price to increases

What materials are used in making of this pottery?

- Meeti
- Mustard oil
- Water
- Mercury powder

Are u selling on any online platforms?

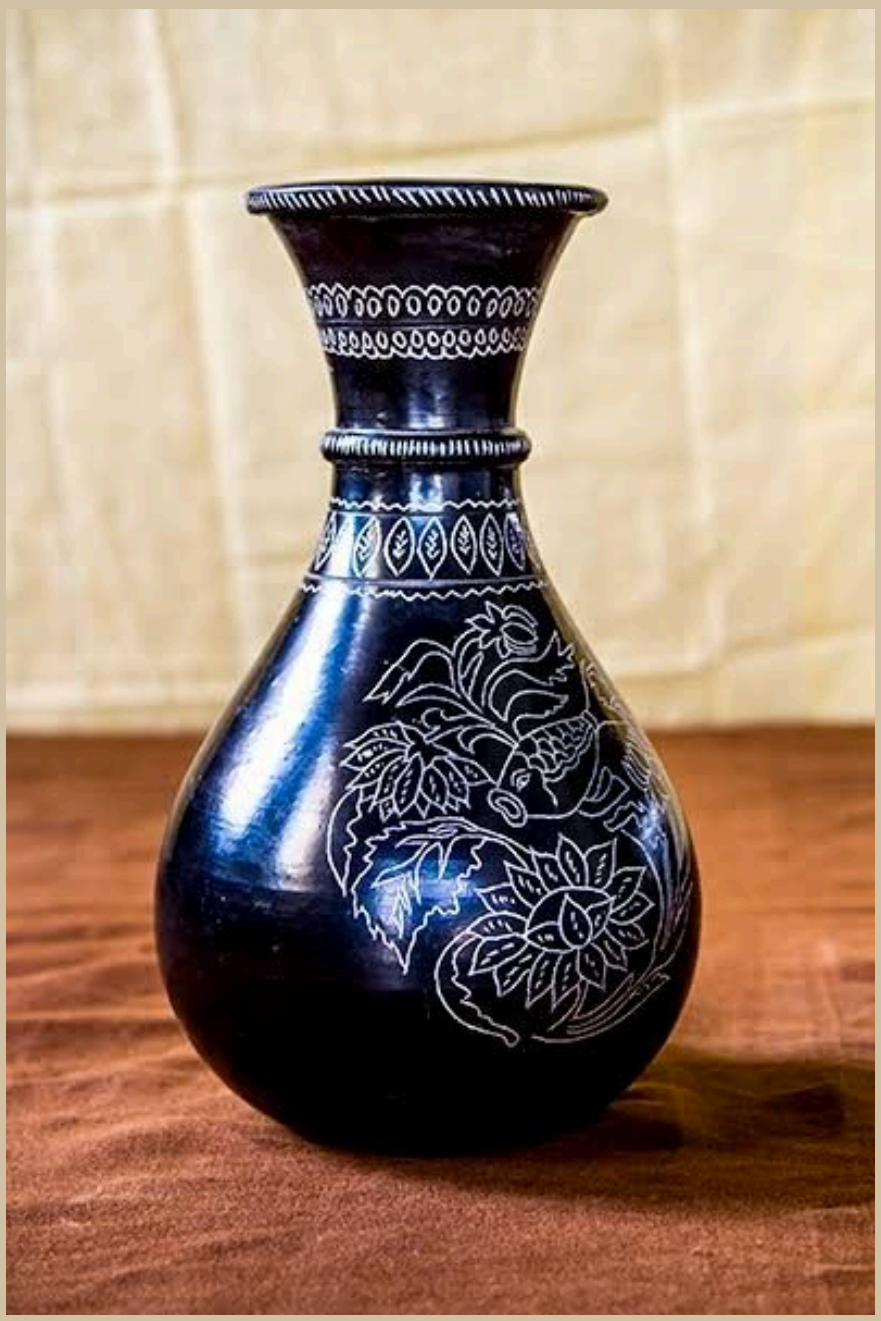
No, we are not selling on any online platforms. This is because we dont know how to package these pots and deliever them safely to the customers, without any damage.

What challenges are you facing while performing this craft?

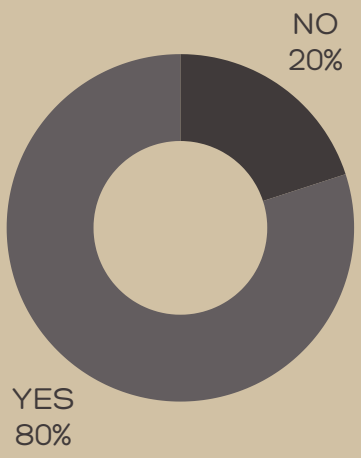
The challenge that we face is that, the bhati (kiln) size is not big enough to fit many pots at once. This makes the process more time-consuming, especially for the bulk orders

Are there any changes in the process of making these black pots? Any changes in the raw materials used

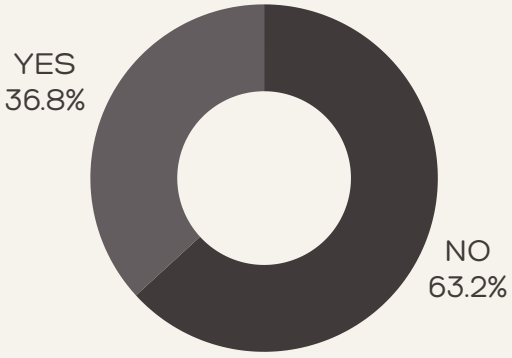
No, the process has been same for years. The raw materials used are also same, however when we were making a pot for the prime minister, we used “chandi” instead of mercury as the fillings.



DATA ANALYSIS

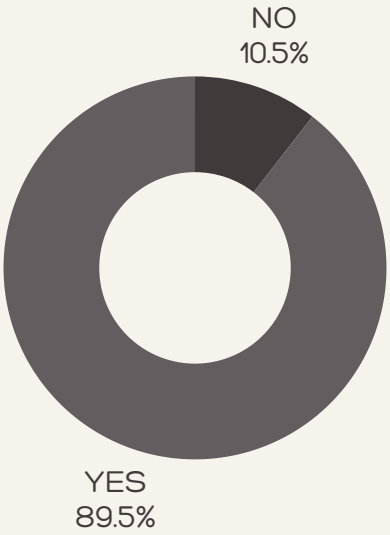


Do you know about the craft of black pottery of Nizamabad?

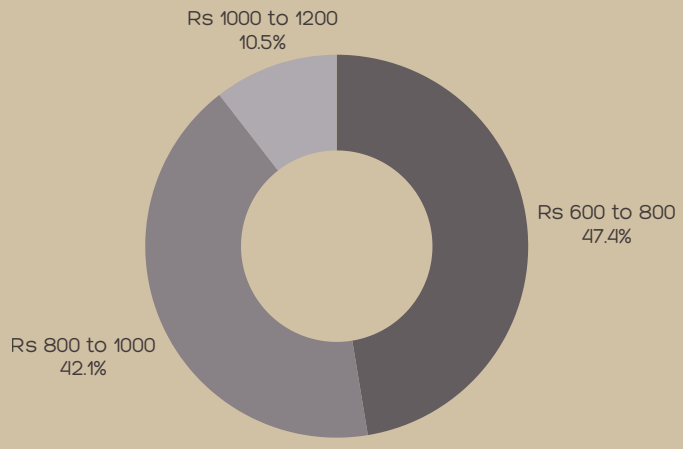


Did you know traditional Black Pottery of Nizamabad has floral and geometric motifs with silver fillings?

Do you think the younger generation is interested in this craft?

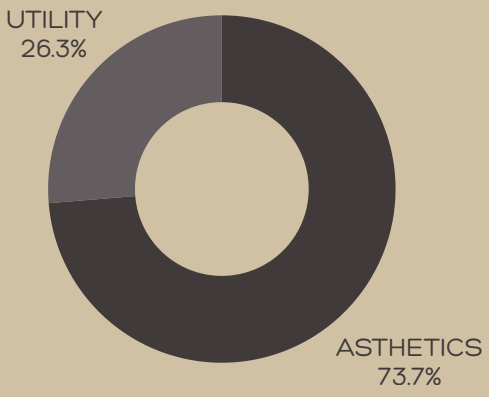


Do you think modern patterns/motifs will interest the younger generation to purchase this craft ?

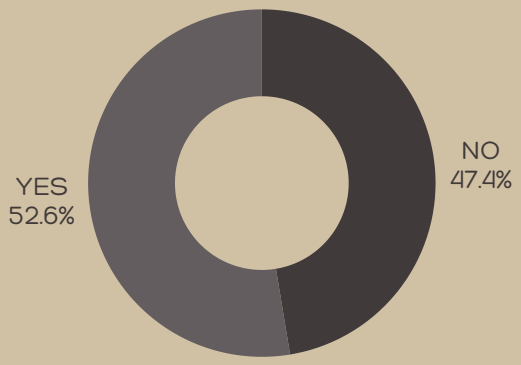


What price would you be willing to pay for a 10 inch black vase ?

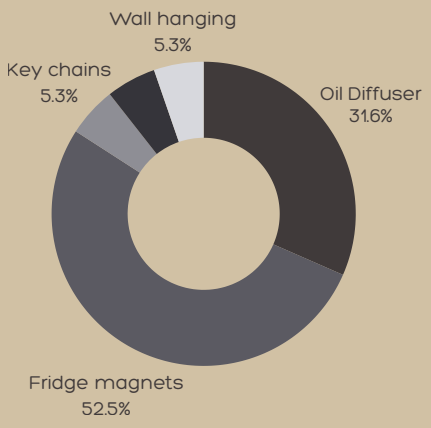
Do you own any kind of pottery?



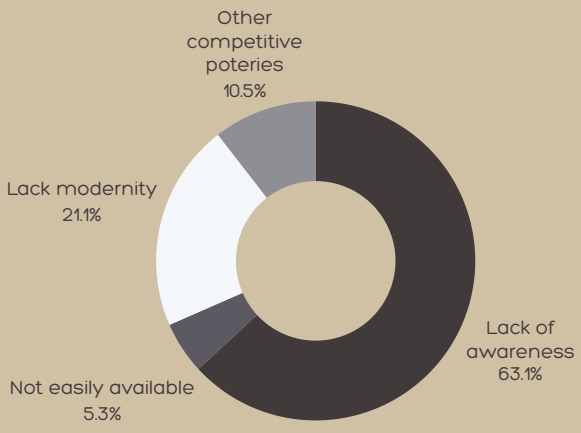
Do you use pots for their aesthetic value or their utility?



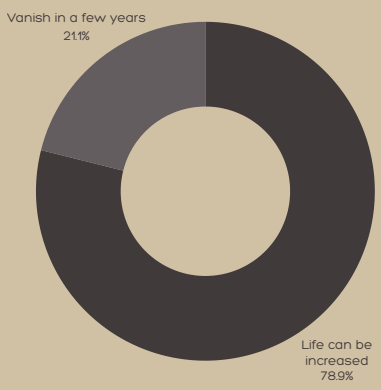
Are u likely to purchase black pots over other types of pots, for example, Blue Pottery?



If not pots, what other products will you be interested in purchasing made from this craft?



Why do you think this craft is not doing so well in the market?



What do you think about the future of this craft?

PROBLEMATIC STATEMENT & SOLUTION

PROBLEM

- Lack of awareness - The data analysis shows that more than 50% people were not aware about the craft
- “Bhatis (kiln) are not big enough for multiple pots to fit at once

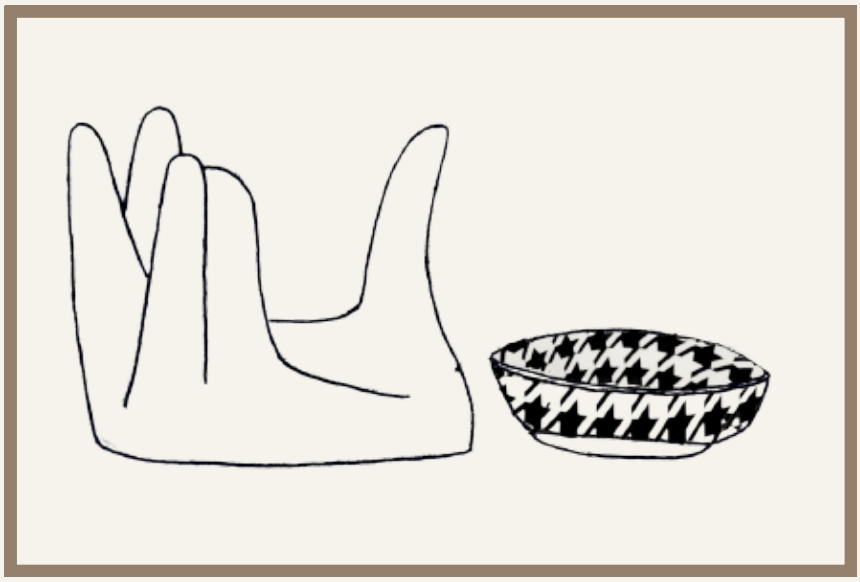
SOLUTION

- Selling the product on digital platforms, like amazon will help reaching a larger audience. Along with this running ads on amazon will make people aware about black pottery
- Producing newer and different kinds of products, which are comparatively smaller in size. This way one bhati can fit in many of same kind.

RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

In research synopsis, one finalises the problem they will be working on and according to the solution provide designs. The designs solve the problem which the artisan is facing and it will help to revive the dying craft .

DESIGN DEVELOPMEN



After understandi
perspectives of both, t
and the customers, I c
conclusion of making
magnet and oil diffus
these are smaller i
compared to the vase,
solves the kiln issue.

T AND CONCEPT NOTE

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From the data analysis we understood that the younger generation is interested in modern motifs. The authenticity of the craft is kept unchanged by using black and white as the colours.

LIMITATIONS

- The inability to visit the location due to time constraints limited first-hand observations and primary data collection.
- Understanding the artisans' craft-specific technical terminology required additional clarification and guidance.
- The geographical scope of the analysis was limited, potentially affecting the broader relevance of the results.
- The survey consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, and the relatively small sample size of 50 responses may limit the representativeness of the findings.
- The findings are based on the data available during the study period and may not reflect future trends

CONCLUSIONS

- Expand the business through online sales channels and digital platforms.
- Develop a dedicated website to strengthen the brand's online presence and enable direct customer sales.
- Introduce smaller, affordable product variants to appeal to a wider customer base.
- Explore innovative and sustainable packaging methods to enhance product presentation and protection.
- Increase customer awareness about the affordability and value of Black Pottery products through targeted marketing initiatives.
- Experiment with contemporary motifs and designs while preserving the traditional craft identity.
- Expand sales through e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and utilize Amazon-sponsored advertisements to improve product visibility and reach.
- Seek government assistance to construct additional bhatis (traditional kilns) to support increased production capacity.

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